

believe that you need a reformed, responsible Palestinian partner to achieve that security.

I can understand the deep anger and despair of the Palestinian people. For decades you've been treated as pawns in the Middle East conflict. Your interests have been held hostage to a comprehensive peace agreement that never seems to come, as your lives get worse year by year. You deserve democracy and the rule of law. You deserve an open society and a thriving economy. You deserve a life of hope for your children. An end to occupation and a peaceful, democratic Palestinian state may seem distant, but America and our partners throughout the world stand ready to help—help you make them possible as soon as possible.

If liberty can blossom in the rocky soil of the West Bank and Gaza, it will inspire millions of men and women around the globe who are equally weary of poverty and oppression, equally entitled to the benefits of democratic government.

I have a hope for the people of Muslim countries. Your commitments to morality and learning and tolerance led to great historical achievements, and those values are alive in the Islamic world today. You have a rich culture, and you share the aspirations of men and women in every culture. Prosperity and freedom and dignity are not just American hopes or Western hopes. They are universal, human hopes. And even in the violence and turmoil of the Middle East, America believes those hopes have the power to transform lives and nations.

This moment is both an opportunity and a test for all parties in the Middle East, an opportunity to lay the foundations for future peace, a test to show who is serious about peace and who is not. The choice here is stark and simple. The Bible says, "I have set before you life and death . . . therefore choose life." The time has arrived for everyone in this conflict to choose peace and hope and life.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:47 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House.

Remarks to Firefighters and Displaced Families in Eagar, Arizona June 25, 2002

The President. Thank you. It's nice to see you. I'm sorry we're doing so under these circumstances. But I want you to know that a lot of people in our country are pulling for you. They understand the suffering that families are going through because of worry about your most precious possession, your home. They understand that a lot of you are living in tents when you'd rather be in your own bed. They cry for you, and they hurt with you. And I'm here to say on behalf of the American people, God bless you.

I want to thank Governor Hull for being—she called me a couple of days ago, and she said, "This is really bad. You've got to understand how bad these fires are. We're kind of used to fires out west, but this is the biggest of all big fires." And I appreciate her leadership. I appreciate her concern.

See, my job and her job is to make sure that all resources are coordinated and funneled to help the people. That's what we're here to do. And the Governor is committed to that, and as am I. And that's why I brought my man, Joe Allbaugh. Where is he? There he is.

Audience member. Right here.

The President. He's the pretty one. [Laughter] He runs what they call FEMA, which is the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Its job is to provide help. That's what its job is to do, provide help during emergency. And this is an emergency.

Today I signed a declaration declaring this an emergency, which then provides for Federal help, which means money to fight the fires. It means temporary housing money and long-term housing money. It means help for small-business owners. I understand there's a lot of small-business owners who are worried about your business, and I don't blame you. I'd be worried too. And it provides help. It helps provide counseling services, and a lot of folks here—I hope if you need counseling, you ask for it—a lot of people we want to help. So, this is the Federal Government's way of committing the resources allowed under the law, the full extent of the resources under the law.

I appreciate Congressman J.D. Hayworth for working this issue hard. I appreciate you being here, J.D. Thanks for coming.

We got people down here from the Interior Department. A fellow named Steven Griles is the number two man in the Interior Department. I want to thank Steve for being on site here, for spending a lot of time in this area—again, to make sure that whatever we can do to help, we really would like to try to do so.

I want to thank the Red Cross. I appreciate the good—I appreciate, I want to thank Chad Ettmueller, who's the—I guess the man in charge of the Red Cross here. He just gave me a briefing on the number of meals being served—over 9,000—the number of people being housed.

You know, one of the great things about this country is that there's a lot of loving people here in this country. I always say—[*applause*]. And not only is the Red Cross helping, but the Salvation Army is as well. See, here's what I tell them. What the enemy didn't understand is, when they attacked America, they didn't understand how kind and decent this country is. And so I'm here to say thanks on behalf of the volunteers, the people who are doing their best to spread compassion to people who need compassion, to spread love to people who need love, to spread guidance to people who seek guidance.

I also want to thank the Forest Service, Dale Bosworth. Listen, we've got a lot of work to do to make sure the Forest Service has got wise forest policy, to make sure to maintain the forests so that they're healthy and viable and not become kindling-boxes.

I want to thank all the firefighters, the people who are—[*applause*]. I had the honor of shaking some hands today of some of those who wear the uniform of the firefighter. You know, we focus on the houses which have been lost, and there have been too many houses lost. One house lost is too many houses lost—one house. But there's been thousands of homes saved too, and that's important.

People that are just working their hearts out on behalf of their fellow citizens, you can look in their eyes and see the exhaustion. But I can assure you, having talked to them, and

I know you have as well, they're not quitting until this thing is whipped. And I hope that makes you feel somewhat better, to know there's a lot of people out there working their heart out on your behalf.

I want to thank the mayors who are here, Kelly, Mayor Kelly, Mayor Handorf, and Mayor Kay Dyson, of Show Low and Pinetop and Springerville. You see, one of the other things that's important is there's a lot of local folks who are doing everything they can to help as well. I want to thank Dallas Massey, who's the chairman of the White Mountain Apache Tribe. He came by to say hello today.

Let me make this clear to you: We're all in this together. It is a—these fires wreak havoc on everybody who stands in their way. They don't pick and choose. And I hope, as we stay united to make sure that we do the best job we can in fighting these fires, that people stay united in doing this. It's an important moment. It's an important time for people to stay bound up in their compassion and in their desire to fight off this devastating disaster that's befallen you all.

And so it's been my honor to come. I look forward to shaking as many hands as I can. This is a—I know it's a tough moment in a lot of people's lives, there's just no doubt in my mind. But just like this war we're under, I believe out of evil can come some great good. It's hard to tell it right now. It's hard to tell it. I know it's hard to tell it. It's easy for me; you say, yes, sure, he flies down in Air Force One and comes here and says that. It's easy for him to say it. But that's what I believe, because I do believe there is a gracious and almighty God that's looking out after the people who've been affected.

So hang in there. Hang in there, you're brave and great people. Thanks for giving me a chance to come by and say hello. May God bless you, and may God bless your families.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:48 a.m. in the multipurpose room at Round Valley High School. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Jane Dee Hull of Arizona; Chad Ettmueller, chief development officer, Grand Canyon Chapter, American Red Cross; Dale Bosworth, Chief, U.S. Forest Service; Mayor Gene Kelly of Show Low, AZ; Mayor Ginny Handorf of Pinetop-Lakeside, AZ; and Mayor Kay Dyson of Springerville, AZ. The Office

of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Statement on Signing Legislation To Implement International Terrorism Conventions

June 25, 2002

Earlier today I signed into law the implementing legislation for two very important United Nations international conventions against terrorism: the International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings and the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism. I thank the Congress, especially the judiciary committees, for its hard work in passing this legislation, which will strengthen our campaign against global terrorism. The Senate gave its advice and consent to ratification of these Conventions last December. Now that this legislation has been enacted, the United States will deposit its instruments of ratification at the United Nations and become a party to these two Conventions.

These two Conventions strengthen international efforts to defeat terrorism of global reach. They underscore—along with 10 other international terrorism conventions—the broad moral consensus that violence against innocent civilians is a criminal act and must be punished. These Conventions also require parties to them to take practical steps to bring terrorists and their supporters to justice. The Terrorist Bombings Convention creates a new and important mechanism for nations to cooperate in investigating and prosecuting terrorist crimes. The International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism strengthens our continuing efforts to cut off the flow of funds to terrorist groups.

In Canada this week, I will be discussing with leaders from other industrialized nations ways we can ensure that all countries take stronger legal measures against terrorism. In particular, I urge all countries to join us in becoming party to these Conventions and fully adhering to U.N. Security Council Resolutions to stop terrorism, particularly U.N. Security Council Resolution 1373, which denies safe haven to terrorists and prohibits ter-

rorist financing, recruitment, and access to weapons and other support. I will continue to work with other leaders around the world to build a consensus that terrorism, whatever the excuse, is unacceptable. Working together, America and the other freedom-loving nations of the world are moving towards a day when our children can live free from the fear of terrorism and free to achieve their dreams.

NOTE: H.R. 3275, approved June 25, was assigned Public Law No. 107-197.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Legislation To Increase the Public Debt Limit

June 25, 2002

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. Leader:)

I am writing to ask that the bipartisan cooperation you have shown in our war against terror and creation of a new Department of Homeland Security be extended to another important priority: maintaining the full faith and credit of the United States Government.

Because of the economic slowdown that began in the summer of 2000, the terrorist attacks of September 11, and the ongoing expense of the war, the Secretary of the Treasury last December asked the Congress to increase the statutory ceiling on the Government's ability to raise funds. Seven months later, the Congress has still not acted, although it has routinely fulfilled this responsibility in the past.

The Treasury has had to take extraordinary measures to allow the United States Government to continue to function normally as a result of the failure of the Congress to act. These are only temporary measures, not an excuse for the Congress to fail to fulfill its duties.

I urge you and Minority Leader Gephardt to show the same spirit of bipartisan cooperation that Senate Majority Leader Daschle and Senate Minority Leader Lott showed 2 weeks ago with their bipartisanship on this important issue.

As we fight for freedom, we must not imperil the full faith and credit of the United